THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

By EDGAR P. JACOBS

Part 1

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH

9th CINEBOOK
The 9th Art Publisher

E. P. JACOBS

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH

PART 1

THE INCREDIBLE CHASE

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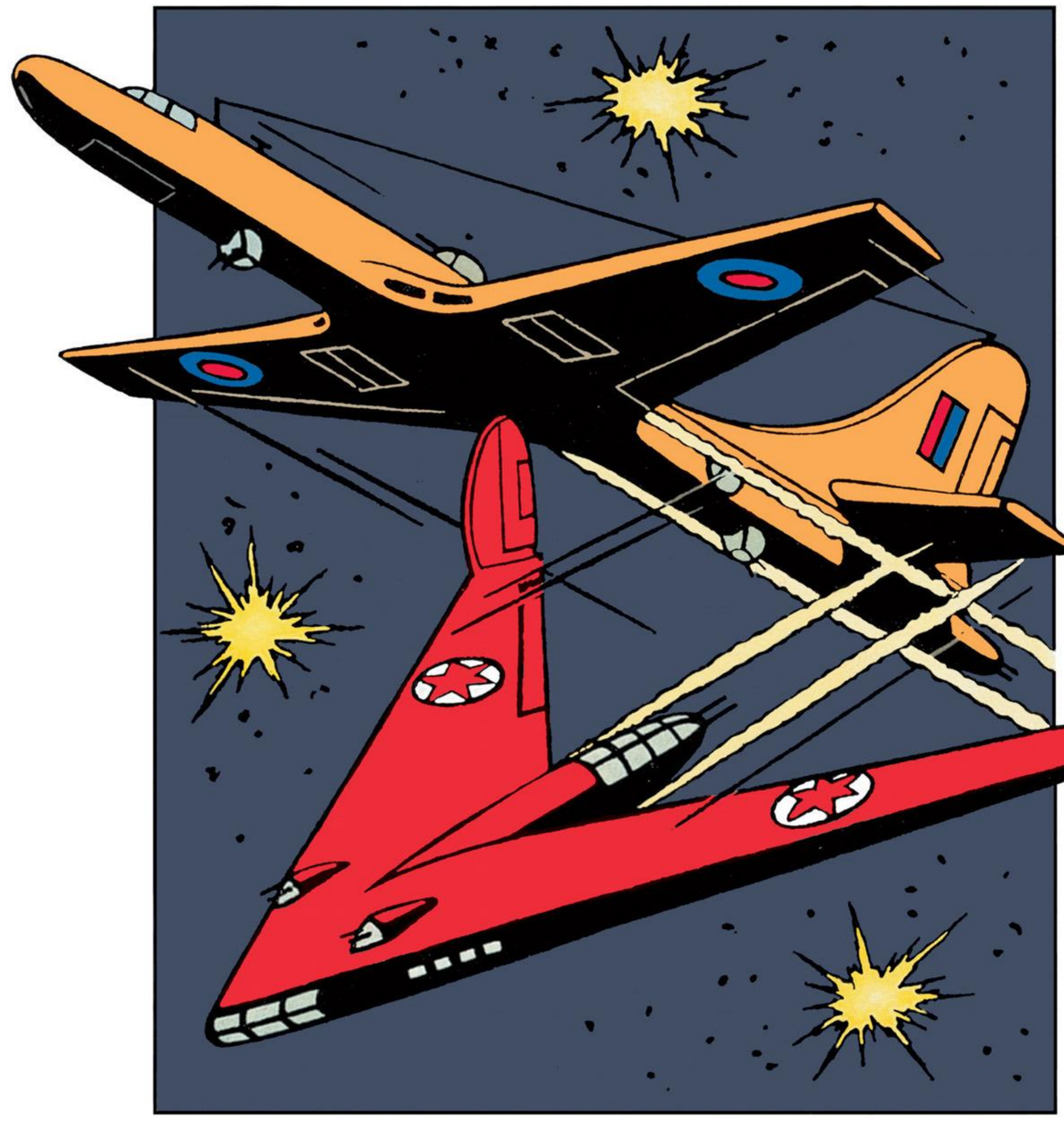

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WHILE THROUGHOUT A WORRIED WORLD PACTS ARE DRAWN AND SUMMITS ARE CONVENED, THE MYSTERIOUS "YELLOW EMPIRE," HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN ASIA, HAS JUST COMPLETED FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE MOST HORRIFIC, MOST CRIMINAL OF WARS. COLONEL OLRIK, A CRAFTY AND UNSCRUPULOUS ADVENTURER AS WELL AS CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY ADVISOR TO THE USURPER BASAM DAMDU, EMPEROR OF TIBET, IS MAKING A LAST INSPECTION OF THE LHASA ARSENAL, GUIDED BY COLONEL TAKSA, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE ARMY'S TECHNICAL ORGANISATION.

... Finally, let's conclude with the super-bazooka, recoilless artillery capable of firing 500 rockets per minute...

... and the "Dragon" flamethrower tank. One hundred tonnes! It can crush a bunker as though it were a simple molehill...

F.51

... and now that we have seen what we could call the conventional equipment, Colonel, here are the atomic weapons: rockets and drones that can obliterate the world in mere hours!...

Remarkable! However, we will only use them if we are forced to. Our goal is not to destroy, but to conquer...

I fully understand, Colonel. Which is why we developed even more efficient weapons that can eliminate the enemy while keeping his economic potential intact. For example, the green gas GX3, which kills through any protective mask by radioactivity. And we've already done better with... Oh, but I apologise. I talk and talk, and...

Indeed. Time flies, and I'm expected at the airfield. Thus, I am forced, against my will, to bid you farewell. Rest assured, though, Colonel, that I shall not fail to report to the Emperor the zeal with which you have performed your difficult mission...

Colonel!...

MOMENTS LATER, PASSING THE ARSENAL GATE, THE COLONEL'S POWERFUL CAR SPEEDS AWAY INTO THE NIGHT.

MIDNIGHT... LHASA AIRFIELD IS BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY. LONG FILES OF AIRBORNE TROOPS MARCH INTO HEAVY TRANSPORTS, WHILE MECHANICS HURRY TO AND FRO...

GATHERED INSIDE THE AIRPORT'S HEADQUARTERS, THE COMMANDERS OF THE VARIOUS WINGS ARE WAITING.

THE DOOR OPENS SUDDENLY...

Gentlemen! Colonel Olrik, advisor to His Majesty, brings you the Emperor's orders!...

Good evening, gentlemen...

Here is the Emperor's message: "Officers, the hour has come! It is with you, glorious heirs of thousands of years of bravery and heroism... it is with your courage and decisiveness that rests the success of the grand plans I have made for the glory of my people. To you, sons of mighty Asia, falls the task of defeating and enslaving the decadent, corrupt masses. That is why the honourable endeavour of this historic day is destined for a brilliant victory! The world is yours! Take it, and may Begtse* guide you!... The attack will be launched this night at two o'clock!!!..."

SAH!!! SAH!!! SAH!!!

Now, gentlemen, I must stress to you the technical aspects of the operation. It must be clear that our goal is not to destroy conquered nations, which would run counter to our interests, but to seize them. Therefore, in order to break our opponents' spirit, we will hit their capitals and vital centres hard. To do so, our ground-attack aircraft and airborne units will fly behind formations of remote-controlled machines that will sweep the way clear for you. Our fifth column agents will do the rest... I will now distribute the mission orders!... The western sectors first... Colonel Cheng Tien...

... you get the Berlin sector... Colonel Lu Ying, Paris... Good luck!

You can count on us, Colonel!

Colonel Hien Fung, you'll have the London sector! Colonel, your orders are slightly different: While you take care of London, the 1st Squadron of your 102nd Wing will be placed under my direct orders. Our mission will be delicate: parachute onto the Scafell factory and take it intact. I cannot emphasize enough how vital this mission is! Please send the necessary orders to the crews...

AS THE WING COMMANDERS, ONE BY ONE, COME TAKE THEIR MISSION ORDERS, CAPTAIN HASSO—AN AGENT WORKING FOR THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICE—LISTENS IN WITH A MICROPHONE, HIDDEN BENEATH THE CONFERENCE ROOM...

HA! HA!

*A BUDDHIST DHARMA PROTECTOR, SOMETIMES CONSIDERED THE LORD OF WAR, WHOSE NAME MEANS "THE GREAT COAT OF MAIL"

MOMENTS LATER...

I've learnt enough. Time to go!

Home. On the double!

It was he, then!

Gentlemen, an unexpected bit of business requires my immediate attention. The general will continue giving you your assignments. I will see you soon!

I have work to do. Do not disturb me under any circumstances...

Very well, Captain.

Hello, Scafell!... Come in, Scafell! This is ZH22! This is ZH22! Top-priority message!... Come in, Scafell... Come in, Scafell...

AT THE SAME TIME, SOME 5,000 MILES AWAY, CAPTAIN BLAKE OF THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE HAS JUST LANDED ON THE AIRFIELD OF THE SCAFELL SECRET PLANT. TAKING ONE OF THE LITTLE ELECTRIC TRAINS THAT CONNECT THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE COMPLEX, HE QUICKLY MAKES HIS WAY TO THE BLUEPRINT OFFICE.

He's in from London... I say, I'd give up a week of my pay to hear what news he's bringing from there!

Yes, he looks rather worried this morning...

He is, indeed, Sir!

STATION 2

Is the professor still here, Steve?

SF. 2.4

IN HIS LABORATORY DESPITE THE LATE HOUR, PROFESSOR MORTIMER, INVENTOR OF A MYSTERIOUS MACHINE CODENAMED "SWORDFISH," IS WORKING...

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN, REVEALING CAPTAIN BLAKE.

Hello, Blake! I was expecting you. So, how did it go at the Cabinet meeting?

Badly! Very badly! Deaf and blind halfwits, the lot of them... The U.N.! Public opinion!... That's all they talk about!...

... It's impossible to get it into their heads that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures! That it is the pinnacle of folly, when the house is already burning, to ask the neighbours for permission to call the fire brigade!...

Bah! We should have expected it...

No sense in agonising over the inevitable, dear fellow. You did your duty by warning them. The rest is up to them. And now, have a scotch and tell me all about it!...

Mortimer, you know as well as I do that the Cold War started by the Yellow Empire almost three years ago is reaching its climax. The massive factories hidden beneath the Himalayas are churning out equipment for an army trained by foreign specialists, including that renegade Olrik. Either fully motorised or airborne, it's a terribly efficient instrument. Moreover, constant and insidious efforts at propaganda and infiltration have managed to undermine the country's morale, which has allowed a small but active group of people to occupy the main command positions. And, all the while, powerful fifth columns scattered among the various target countries only await a signal to spring into action. Their plan is simple: On the day, those units will take strategic locations and airfields by surprise and dig in to hold them; a few hours later, entire regiments of the enemy will start dropping from the sky. Alas! Despite repeated notes from our ambassadors and ever more desperate warnings from our intelligence services, we can't seem to make the Ministry accept that we should go for an emergency, total call-up of troops. But, no! No provocations, they say... No provocations!

Indeed... "Gentlemen, we never atomise first: Fire yourselves!!!" It's ridiculous, but what can we do?... Anyway, we, at least, are ready to face all eventualities, thanks to the construction of our secret base as a backup for Scafell. In a week, the prototype of the Swordfish will be complete. Let's say two months for the trials and final adjustments, and then we'll be ready for mass production. And the Yellow Empire had better beware! Besides, they'll never attack at this time of year...

I wouldn't be so sure!... Ah, well. May the Heavens hear you, Philip! And speaking of hearing things, any news from ZH22?

No, except for...

AT THAT MOMENT...

Hello, Scafell. Come in, Scafell! This is relay 153. This is relay 153. Top-priority message from agent ZH22!...

Speak of the devil...

Hello, this is Scafell!...

The global attack will be launched tonight at two o'clock, local time. Scafell will...

OH!...

!

!

... Olrik!!!... The colonel!!!

BANG!

THE DOOR OPENS SUDDENLY, AND...

Swine!

Olrik!... The devil take that man! Just as he was about to talk about Scafell!

No matter. We've heard enough!... The Imperials beat us to the punch. And, since Olrik's heard about our Swordfish, you can be sure he'll do the impossible to get the complex intact.

Which means we have only one option available: execute plan D—partial dismantling and destruction of the equipment... They can't get here until 3 or 4am, at least not the paratroopers. That's more than enough time... Mortimer, take care of the documents and microfilm blueprints. As for me, I'll alert the War Office and give the evacuation order.

Right!

MOMENTS LATER...

Hello! Hello! Calling all sectors!... Prepare to implement the evacuation, dismantlement and destruction plan. Gather in the vehicle park!... Calling all sectors! Calling all sectors!...

SFR

THE STENTORIAN VOICES OF THE LOUDSPEAKERS BELLOW THEIR GLOOMY CALLS TO THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE MASSIVE COMPLEX...

Hello! Hello! Calling all sectors!... Prepare to implement the destruction plan!... Hello! Hello!

Hello! Hello!

THE HOUR HAS COME FOR THE ATTACK, AND THE TAKE-OFF SIGNAL BLINKS OUT FROM THE LHASA CONTROL TOWER.

Two o'clock. Go ahead!...

SUDDENLY, WITH AN ALMIGHTY ROAR, THE GIANT ROCKETS LEAP TOWARDS THE SKY...

... SOON FOLLOWED BY THE ENTIRE AIR ARMADA, EACH OF ITS FLEETS HEADING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION...

... WHILE, FROM THE TOP OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE, BASAM DAMDU THE USURPER GAZES UPON HIS BIRDS OF DEATH AS THEY TAKE FLIGHT.

Tomorrow I will rule the world!

MEANWHILE, A SURVEILLANCE POST KEEPING WATCH FROM DEEP INSIDE VAST SIBERIA HAS DETECTED THE APPROACHING ENEMY SQUADRONS...

Hello! Hello! This is post R10. Many formations flying west over our territory...

... Those in front seem to be radio-controlled!

IMMEDIATELY, IN MOSCOW...

Alert all our forces!

SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE, THE TERRIBLE NEWS TRAVELS AROUND THE GLOBE...

This is London speaking... Special broadcast!!! We have just received news that, in betrayal of all the treaties signed with its overly trusting neighbours, the Yellow Empire—whose ambassador in London was still protesting its good intentions this very afternoon—has launched a massive air assault against all the nations of the world!

BBC

... and so, what we had feared for so long has now become a terrible reality. In this critical hour, Great Britain, with the help of its loyal allies—notably from the Atlantic Pact—will oppose this criminal attack with the utmost vigour!!!

THE DREADFUL HOURS PASS AS THE IMPLACABLE MACHINES OF DEATH FLY CLOSER AND CLOSER...

Hello! Hello! The War Office instructed us to broadcast the following notice: "All officers, noncommissioned officers and enlisted personnel on leave are ordered to return to their units by the fastest possible means..." Hello! Hello! We've just heard that Moscow, Calcutta and Hankou have been hit by severe atomic strikes... In spite of enormous material losses, the attackers are still advancing!... Hello! Hello! Above the burning city of Warsaw, fierce fighting between the heroic Polish Air Force and...

ALL THE WHILE, SCAFELL'S DEMOLITION TEAMS HURRIEDLY SET UP THEIR EXPLOSIVES.

... Hello! Hello! This just in: We've received confirmation that Rome, the eternal city, has just been wiped off the face of the map!!! Twenty-five centuries of civilisation destroyed in one instant! The bestial savagery of such an odious act will, no doubt, cause every defender of Western culture to rise against the barbarian hordes!!!...

BBC

AS THE SIRENS SING THEIR SONG OF DOOM OVER THE DESERTED HALLS, THE MEN TAKE THEIR PLACES BY TEAM IN THE EVACUATION LORRIES...

AREA 4.

SK5

Hello! Hello!... The threat is drawing nearer... Despite furious opposition by the Luftwaffe, Berlin has been reduced to smouldering ruins once again... Hello! Hello!... The War Office urges all non-combatants to head for the shelters promptly and to bring their gas masks!... This just in: Paris, crushed by heavy bombing, is now burning as well... However, the Maginot line has been reinforced considerably, and...

AT DAWN, THE LAST LORRY FINALLY LEAVES SCAFELL...

That's the evacuation over. Our turn, now. Is everything ready?

Yes. Harry just called to say that the Golden Rocket is already prepped on the tarmac...

Hello! Hello! We have just heard that the Home Fleet, gathered in the Channel, is engaging Imperial forces!... The entire RAF is attacking... Keep calm, and England expects that every man will do his duty!... Hello! It is now Madrid's turn to...

AROUND THE GOLDEN ROCKET, WHICH WILL TAKE BLAKE AND MORTIMER TO THE SECRET BASE, PILOTS AND MECHANICS ARE WORKING THROUGH A LAST-MINUTE INSPECTION.

Hello! Hello! Despite the combined efforts of the Royal Navy and the RAF, the enemy has broken through all our defences and is now diving into London!!! We can clearly follow the fast approach of the radio-controlled missiles on the radar screen!... They're coming!... They're here!... God save England!

AND SUDDENLY, LIKE A RAIN OF FIERY METEORS, HUNDREDS OF ROCKETS FALL SCREAMING OUT OF THE SKY AND SLAM INTO THE UNFORTUNATE CITY!...

AT THAT MOMENT, BLAKE AND MORTIMER, NOW IN FULL FLIGHT GEAR AND CARRYING THEIR PRECIOUS DOCUMENTS, HURRY TOWARDS THE RUNWAY...

Is Hudson at his post?

He's only waiting for our signal.

... WHILE, IN HIS REINFORCED BUNKER, HANDS ON THE PLUNGER, A STONE-FACED ENGINEER HUDSON IS WAITING...

TIME IS PRESSING, THOUGH, AND THE CREW OF THE GOLDEN ROCKET QUICKLY CLIMBS ABOARD.

Come on, lads, to your posts! Hurry!

Ah, finally!

Phew! Just in time!

There they are!

THE ENEMY AIR FLEET HAS JUST APPEARED IN THE DISTANCE...

... AND, SUDDENLY, HUNDREDS OF PARATROOPERS JUMP DOWN TOWARDS THE GROUND...

... JUST AS THE GOLDEN ROCKET, JET ENGINES AT MAXIMUM, TAKES OFF AND LEAPS INTO THE SKY!

ABOARD HIS COMMAND AIRCRAFT, THE RED WING, OLRIK EXULTS...

Victory is ours!

ON THE GOLDEN ROCKET, THOUGH...

Hello, Hudson?... Are you all set?... Right, do it!!!

THE NEXT MOMENT, A TERRIFIC EXPLOSION RENDS THE AIR, FOLLOWED BY A SECOND AND THEN A THIRD; AND THE GIGANTIC COMPLEX, ITS BUILDINGS COLLAPSING ONE AFTER ANOTHER, IS SOON REDUCED TO A SEA OF FLAMES...

The devil!...

HOWEVER, ONE OF THE GUNNERS OF THE RED WING HAS JUST SIGHTED THE GOLDEN ROCKET, AND...

This is starboard gunner! I have an aircraft escaping!...

By thunder!!! That's the Golden Rocket! Quick, after it!

BANKING HARD, THE RED WING BEGINS CHASING THE FUGITIVES.

OLRIK'S PLANE QUICKLY CATCHES UP WITH ITS QUARRY AND IS READY TO FIRE ITS CANNONS AT IT...

... BUT THE GOLDEN ROCKET'S AIR DEFENCES, QUICKER ON THE MARK, OPEN UP FIRST...

HIT BY A WELL-PLACED BURST, THE RED WING REARS UP SHAKILY...

... AND IMMEDIATELY BEGINS LOSING ALTITUDE, A LONG TRAIL OF BLACK SMOKE MARKING ITS DESCENT.

Hello! This is the engineer! We have serious damage! Engines 3 and 4 are dead. We need to make an emergency landing!

Damn! They're going to get away! Hello, wireless operator! Quick, transmit as follows:

"... All available planes are ordered to intercept British Rocket-type aircraft escaping to the southeast."

"... All radar and anti-aircraft units must locate and destroy a British Rocket-type aircraft escaping to the southeast."

IN THE GLORIOUS LIGHT OF DAWN, THE GOLDEN ROCKET, HAVING LOST ITS PURSUERS, HEADS TOWARDS ITS SECRET BASE.

Say, Jim! Why don't you see if you can pick up Lhassa on the wireless...

"This is Lhassa..."

"The lightning strike designed by our brilliant Emperor has worked perfectly. No one could withstand the triumphant flight of our invincible air fleets. The proudest cities have been ground to dust!..."

"Bombay is nothing but ruins and desolation!..."

"...Rome, the eternal city, is only a memory..."

"... Paris, the city of light, has been utterly crushed!..."

"... The proud metropolis of London has been turned to ash!..."

"... The American Pacific Fleet lies at the bottom of the ocean, while..."

"... our paratroopers raise our colours on the skyscrapers of the New World!..."

"... The whole planet is in our hands! We are the Masters of the World!"

Just you wait... Our time will come, Mortimer...

Good heavens! Blake, how dreadful!

SUDDENLY, A POWERFUL EXPLOSION STRIKES CLOSE TO THE GOLDEN ROCKET...

BANG

... ROCKING IT DANGEROUSLY.

Flak!

WITH A SERIES OF QUICK EVASIVE MANOEUVRES, BLAKE ATTEMPTS TO SHAKE IT...

... BUT THE BATTERY HAS THEM BRACKETED.

UNTIL SUDDENLY...

Got it!

INDEED, THE GOLDEN ROCKET HAS JUST GONE INTO A STEEP DIVE AND FALLS AT A TERRIBLE SPEED...

They're going to crash in the valley!

HOWEVER, THE PLANE SUDDENLY PULLS UP AND HEADS STRAIGHT FOR THE BATTERIES. THE FLAK CREWS, CAUGHT BY SURPRISE, HAVE NO TIME TO REACT BEFORE THE GOLDEN ROCKET IS UPON THEM...

?

... AND OPENS FIRE, RIDDLING THEM WITH INCENDIARY SHELLS.

ONE OF THEM HITS AN AMMUNITION DUMP, AND THE RESULTING BLAST SOWS PANIC AMONG THE FRANTICALLY FLEEING SOLDIERS...

BOOM!

... WHILE THE GOLDEN ROCKET, SCREAMING JUST ABOVE THE HEADS OF THE TERRIFIED IMPERIALS...

... THUNDERS ALMOST STRAIGHT UP INTO THE SKY!

Well done, Francis! Your feint was an outstanding success.

Bah. It was risky, but we didn't have much choice!

Unfortunately, this incident means we've been spotted. I think it would be more prudent to head up quickly to the stratosphere.

A wise precaution! I'm afraid we could soon be in another scrap, indeed... I'll warn the crew.

THE MEN IMMEDIATELY ADJUST THEIR STRATOSPHERIC EQUIPMENT.

SLOWLY, THE GOLDEN ROCKET BEGINS CLIMBING...

... TOWARDS THE FROZEN EMPTINESS OF THE STRATOSPHERE.

THREE HOURS LATER... A RADAR STATION OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY LOCATED IN THE MOUNTAINS NEAR DJARBEKIR.

SUDDENLY, ON THE RADAR SCREEN, AN OPERATOR SEES THE SIGNAL OF THE GOLDEN ROCKET APPEAR...

Scramble the fighters!... The Golden Rocket has just entered our sector... Heading east-southeast!

THE PILOTS IMMEDIATELY RUSH TO THEIR AIRCRAFT.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE STRATOSPHERIC SHARK INTERCEPTORS BLAST OFF AFTER THE FUGITIVES...

UNFORTUNATELY, AT THAT SAME MOMENT, THE SITUATION HAS GOT WORSE ABOARD THE GOLDEN ROCKET...

Blast it! Blake, the radar stopped working!

Hello! This is rear turret. The electric controls aren't responding!

Hello! This is Flight Engineer! The electric cables of control networks three and six have been severed!...

Hello! This is mid-upper air gunner. The turret is stuck!

HALF AN HOUR LATER...

It's useless... The whole of network three is riddled with shrapnel...

MEANWHILE, THE SHARKS HAVE BEEN DRAWING STEADILY CLOSER. AND SUDDENLY...

We've got them!!!

Look out! Stratospheric fighters to starboard!!!

IN CLOSE FORMATION, THE SHARKS MANOEUVRE THEMSELVES ABOVE THE GOLDEN ROCKET.

This is it, everyone! Battle stations!

Hello! Mid-upper and rear positions, use hand weapons!

Hello, Mortimer! You're in charge of the anti-magnetic device. Use it only at the last second!...

Right, Blake! Count on me!

Ready to dive. Use your magnetic rockets first... Now!
Sah!!!

AND THE ATTACK BEGINS...

Sah!

Sah!

Sah!

THE ELECTROMAGNETIC ROCKETS THUNDER TOWARDS THEIR TARGET WITH A HELLISH SHRIEK...

... BUT, AS MORTIMER TURNS ON THE ANTI-MAGNETIC JAMMING EMITTER...

... A COCOON OF PROTECTIVE WAVES INSTANTLY SURROUNDS THE GOLDEN ROCKET, DEFLECTING THE ROCKETS...

... WHICH, DESPERATE FOR TARGETS, LATCH ONTO THE NEARBY IMPERIAL FORMATION, SMASHING IT INTO A CHAOTIC MESS OF EVADING AIRCRAFT.

BLAKE INSTANTLY BREAKS CONTACT AND VEERS AWAY.

ALAS, THE LEADER OF THE ENEMY'S SQUADRON HAS SEEN THE GOLDEN ROCKET'S MANOEUVRE. HE IMMEDIATELY CHASES AFTER IT AND...

... ONCE IN RANGE, OPENS FIRE ON THE IMMOBILISED REAR TURRET.

By Jove! What was that?

Heavens!... Dead!!!

THE FIGHTER IS ALREADY COMING AROUND FOR ANOTHER PASS...

Oh, just you wait!

And now for the killing blow!

A little closer...

HIT IN ITS VITALS, THE IMPERIAL JET PLUMMETS AWAY IN FLAMES.

Ha! Ha! I think they've had enough this time!

Blake, things are getting dire in here: We have one dead, several wounded and many systems destroyed...

Yes, I think it'd be prudent to call the secret base. Right away... and in code, of course.

Hello, S.B.! Hello, S.B.! Calling S.B.! This is G.R.! This is G.R.! SOS – SOS. Hello, S.B! Come in, S.B.!

JUST THEN, AMONG THE RUINS OF SCAFELL...

At last!

Colonel! We've just intercepted a coded message from the Golden Rocket.

I have Blake's cypher key. I found it on Hasso when I shot him. Let's see...

...nded Urgent medical care needed—send plane to meet us immediately—Hello! This is S.B.! This is S.B.!—We're not receiving you, G.R. Repeat last—Hello! This is G.R.! This is G.R.! Send plane to meet us—Rendezvous at landing point B.32—Are approximately by 23° East—

S.B.?... B.32? What is all this?... A secret base? I hadn't thought of that!... They could rally the various scattered resistance movements and make a fight of it!... By thunder! I need to know for sure!... First, though, I'll alert the closest fighter unit...

MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE GOLDEN ROCKET...

Mortimer!... Help!...

I can't breathe! Hurry, take the controls! The generator... off!... I...

BEFORE MORTIMER HAS A CHANCE TO TAKE THE CONTROLS, THOUGH, THE AIRCRAFT PITCHES FORWARD AND BEGINS A DIZZYING NOSEDIVE...

What the devil is going on?... I can't get her to pull up! Attention, all crew! We're falling! Open the hatches!!!

INDEED, UNDER THE TERRIBLE AIR PRESSURE, THE HORIZONTAL STABILISER, DAMAGED DURING THE FIGHT, TEARS AWAY FROM THE PLANE...

Jump!!!

ABANDONING THE CONTROLS, MORTIMER DRAGS AN UNCONSCIOUS BLAKE TOWARDS THE BOMB BAY AND...

... HAVING OPENED THE DOORS, PUSHES HIS FRIEND OUT OF THE AIRCRAFT BEFORE JUMPING AFTER HIM.

BY THEN, THE FIGHTER SQUADRON ALERTED BY OLRIK, FLYING FULL SPEED, IS NEARING THE LOCATION OF THE ACCIDENT.

Ha! Ha! There they are!... Take that, you dogs!...

THE SHARKS DIVE AFTER THE DEFENCELESS CREW LIKE THEIR NAMESAKES ON A SCHOOL OF FISH...

BLAKE AND MORTIMER, WHO'VE LEFT THE PLANE MUCH LATER THAN THE REST OF THEIR MEN...

... HAVEN'T BEEN SIGHTED BY THE IMPERIALS. BLAKE, STILL UNCONSCIOUS, HANGS LIMPLY FROM HIS HARNESS, WHILE MORTIMER CAN ONLY WATCH AS HIS COMPANIONS ARE MASSACRED. UNFORTUNATELY...

I see another two over there!...

If only we can reach those clouds before him!...

Curses! They vanished into the clouds... I'll fire at random, just in case!

MEANWHILE, MERCILESSLY PICKED OFF BY THE IMPERIALS, THE UNFORTUNATE CREW OF THE GOLDEN ROCKET, THEIR PARACHUTES TORCHED, PLUMMET TOWARDS THE GROUND.

MORTIMER AND BLAKE FINALLY COME OUT OF THE CLOUDS THAT, PROVIDENTIALLY, HAVE HID THEM FROM THEIR ENEMIES' EYES. THE GROUND IS NEAR...

Phew! That was too close for comfort!...

HANGING LIMP FROM HIS PARACHUTE HARNESS, CAPTAIN BLAKE SLOWLY FLOATS DOWN TO THE GROUND.

MORTIMER AND BLAKE FINALLY LAND. JIM AND HARRY, WHO HAVE MIRACULOUSLY ESCAPED THE CARNAGE AS WELL, ARE ALREADY ON THE GROUND.

THE LATTER PROMPTLY RUSH TOWARDS CAPTAIN BLAKE, WHO IS AT RISK OF BEING DRAGGED AWAY BY HIS PARACHUTE.

Thank goodness he's alive... Ah, my dear Blake...

Thanks, old chap...

Look out! They're coming...

THREE IMPERIAL FIGHTERS ARE RAPIDLY APPROACHING THE SURVIVORS.

Quick! Lie down and play dead! It's our only chance!...

Oh? Were they killed somehow? We'll see about that...

Blackguards!!!

Poor Harry...

Dead!

AFTER BURYING THEIR UNFORTUNATE COMPANION HARRY, THE SURVIVORS HOLD AN IMPROMPTU WAR COUNCIL.

I must say, Blake, our situation doesn't look good. No weapons, no food... Let's see, old chap: What do you think we should do?

This: We should try to make our way to the rendezvous point with the rescue aircraft as quickly as possible. It's a lonely plateau in the Herat Mountains, 34 degrees north latitude by 60 degrees east longitude. However, as best we can determine, we're about 75 miles from there. A difficult and dangerous trip! So, to begin with, if we could find a trail...

As a matter of fact, Captain, while I was dangling from my parachute on the way down, I think I saw a trail a couple of miles from here, heading east...

That's exactly what we need!... In that case, let's be on our way right now. The Imperials could come back any moment. You, Jim, run ahead and try to find that trail of yours.

Right you are, sir!

There it is...

Well done!

AN ANCIENT CARAVAN TRAIL STRETCHES ACROSS A DESOLATE LANDSCAPE.

Let's go, old boy!

NIGHT IS FALLING. THE THREE MEN STOP, EXHAUSTED.

Over here, my friends! This looks like a perfect place to stop for the night...

Shhh!... Listen...

No doubt about it: It's the Red Wing!

Olrik's looking for us. That should make our little constitutional interesting!

But, Colonel, the Golden Rocket was shot down. Why keep looking?

Because I want to be certain Blake and Mortimer didn't make it out alive. It's getting too dark, though... Turn us around!

THE NEXT MORNING AT DAWN, BLAKE AND HIS COMPANIONS GET UNDERWAY AGAIN...

THEY HAVE BEEN WALKING FOR AN HOUR WHEN, SUDDENLY, FURTHER DOWN THE TRAIL...

Look, a lorry!

MAJOR HUSSEIN OF THE IRANIAN ARMY—WHO, ALONG WITH HIS MEN, DEFECTED TO THE YELLOW EMPIRE—HAS BEEN ALERTED BY HIS NEW MASTERS AND IS HEADING TOWARDS THE CRASH SITE ON A MILITARY TRANSPORT.

They look like Englishmen, Major!

By Allah! That's them!...

Too late; they've seen us. No point in hiding. I have an idea... Quickly, Jim, hide the blueprints and our papers under a rock and take good note of the location... We'll stand in front of you to block you from sight.

LIEUTENANT ISMAIL, HOWEVER, STANDING BEHIND THE LORRY'S CAB, IS FOLLOWING THEIR EVERY MOVE THROUGH HIS BINOCULARS...

WHICH IS HOW HE CAN SEE, DESPITE THE DISTANCE, JIM SLIPPING SOMETHING UNDER A ROCK.

Captain Blake and the professor are dead. We're the only survivors. My name's Morgan.

Which one of you is Blake? And who's Mortimer? Don't try to lie—we've got you!

We'll see. Search them! You'll regret it if you lied...

WHILE THE PRISONERS ARE BEING SEARCHED, LIEUTENANT ISMAIL SURREPTITIOUSLY APPROACHES THE SPOT WHERE THE DOCUMENTS ARE HIDDEN. THEN, KNEELING DOWN SWIFTLY...

... HE GRABS THE STACK OF PAPERS, WHICH HE IMMEDIATELY SLIPS UNDER HIS JACKET... NO ONE HAS NOTICED THE OFFICER'S MOVEMENTS...

... NOR HAS HE, IN HIS HURRY, SEEN THE FOLDED SHEET THAT HAS FALLEN OUT OF THE STACK AND LANDED AT HIS FEET.

Nothing! That's rather strange... All right, we'll figure it out later. In the meantime, load them up and let's get back to the fort.

Nothing, Major.

THE LORRY TURNS AROUND AND BEGINS RETRACING ITS PATH BACK TO THE FORTIFIED OUTPOST HUSSEIN COMMANDS.

Lock them up, Ismail. I'm going to call the District Commissioner to tell him about our catch...

Very good, very good. That's excellent work, Major Hussein... I'll alert Colonel Olrik immediately... Speaking of whom, take good care of the papers... Yes... Documents of the highest importance... State secrets...

What?... What did you say?... They had no papers on them? Tell me, Hussein, what kind of joke is this? Morgan? Who the devil is that?... Come on, give me a description of those men, quickly...

... As I was honoured to tell Your Excellency, they're two air gunners and a wireless operator. I'm sorry?... The first... Tall... Blond... Small moustache... The second... A stouter man... Yes, Excellency, he has a beard... But... I...

... You've been had, Major!... That's Blake and Mortimer you captured... Oh, I wouldn't want to be you if you don't recover those documents... I'll have the prisoners picked up tonight. In the meantime, no one is to go near them... That's all...

Ha! Ha! Sounds like I was right to grab those papers!

Understood, Major!

Lieutenant, by order of the commissioner, it is absolutely forbidden to go anywhere near the prisoners. Under any circumstances! They'll be transferred tonight.

HIS MIND UNEASY WITH THE COMMISSIONER'S THREATS, HUSSEIN IS NERVOUSLY PACING THE DESERTED COURTYARDS OF THE FORT, AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF OLRIK'S EMISSARIES...

What is this? Light inside the armoury?... Despite my strict orders! Who dares!?

HUSSEIN QUIETLY APPROACHES THE WINDOW AND ESPIES LIEUTENANT ISMAIL FULLY ABSORBED IN READING THE DOCUMENTS HE STOLE...

Nothing... I simply cannot decipher it without the key. Well! I'll go make our prisoners talk, then... Their freedom for the code, followed by a bullet to the back of the head, and that's it... Killed while escaping! Ha! Ha!

Hamid, go wait for me in the courtyard... I have to question these men. I may have to... "persuade" them. So, don't pay attention to any sounds you might hear—not even shots. Only come if I call you. Understood?

I understand, Lieutenant.

Hello, Captain Blake. You and I need to talk...

No need to pretend with me, my dear Captain. You've been recognised, and Olrik is going to have you picked up this very night, you and your friends. So, I will get straight to the point. Here's my offer: I have the documents here. Give me the key to the code and I'll arrange for your escape... I get the blueprints, you get your freedom. So?

Go to hell!

What? You refuse, you miserable dogs? Do you even know what awaits you once Olrik has you? Torture. Yes, torture!...

You seem rather excited, Lieutenant Ismail... Such conduct from an officer.

What is the meaning of this, Lieutenant? Didn't I order that no one come anywhere near these men?...

But Major, I... I was trying to make them talk...

No, he wasn't. This character appropriated our documents without your knowledge, and he was attempting to obtain from us our secret cypher, thus depriving you of the rewards and honours you rightly expected to reap from our capture.

HEARING THIS AND SEEING HIMSELF THUS EXPOSED, AN ENRAGED ISMAIL DRAWS HIS SABRE AND LEAPS AT BLAKE.

You dog!

THE BLADE WHISTLES THROUGH THE AIR, BUT JIM THROWS HIMSELF IN FRONT OF THE CAPTAIN AND TAKES THE MORTAL BLOW!...

HUSSEIN, UNDERSTANDING AT LAST THE FULL EXTENT OF ISMAIL'S DUPLICITY, GRABS HIS THROAT...

You miserable traitor!

A MERCILESS STRUGGLE BEGINS. PUSHED TO THE GROUND, ISMAIL STILL MANAGES TO PULL OUT HIS SIDE ARM AND SHOOT HIS OPPONENT POINT BLANK.

COLLAPSING, HUSSEIN IMMOBILISES ISMAIL WHO, SENSING THE DANGER, TURNS HIS WEAPON AGAINST THE PRISONERS, BUT TOO LATE TO STOP MORTIMER FROM KNOCKING HIM OUT WITH A STOOL!

Quickly, Blake, there isn't a moment to lose! Let's take their uniforms— and don't forget the documents.

Poor, brave Jim... He's gone.

I have the blueprints... Now, let's get to the motor pool. But watch out for the sentry.

I'll take care of it, thanks to Hussein's torch... Wait, I'll go first.

BLINDED BY THE TORCH MORTIMER HAS POINTED RIGHT AT HIM, THE SENTRY IS CONVINCED HE'S DEALING WITH MAJOR HUSSEIN.

Shhh!

HAVING REACHED THE MOTOR POOL, THE TWO MEN CLIMB INSIDE A LORRY...

... START IT UP, AND REACH THE GUARD POST, THE LAST BUT MOST DANGEROUS OBSTACLE.

A lorry? At this hour?...

Halt!

Oh, I'm sorry, Major!

It's working...

Open!

Stop them! Stop them! The major's been shot!

THE ESCAPE IS DISCOVERED.

Punching through! Hold on tight!

THE LORRY CHARGES THROUGH THE GATE, SMASHING IT TO BITS, AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE NIGHT UNDER BELATED FIRE FROM THE GUARDS.

THE LORRY CHARGES THROUGH THE GATE, SMASHING IT TO BITS, AND...

By order of Colonel Olrik, we're here to take custody of the prisoners.

They managed to escape in a lorry about an hour ago. They went towards the border.

AN HOUR AFTER BLAKE AND MORTIMER'S ESCAPE, COLONEL OLRIK'S ENVOYS ARRIVE AT THE POST.

WITHOUT WASTING A SECOND, THE ARMOURED CARS RUSH AFTER THE FUGITIVES.

AT DAWN, BLAKE AND MORTIMER'S LORRY REACHES THE FOOTHILLS OF THE HERAT RANGE.

Luck is with us! There's no one after us.

For good reason! That was a fantastic idea you had, sabotaging the other lorries!

What's going on?

JUST THEN, HALFWAY UP THE SLOPE, THE ENGINE STARTS TO MISFIRE...

Here! A bullet pierced the petrol tank!

WHILE OUR FRIENDS PONDER WHAT TO DO, THEY HEAR A DISTANT RUMBLE OF ENGINES.

?

Let's have a look!

I don't like the sound of that!

Blimey! Armoured cars!

I wasn't expecting that! Olrik isn't wasting any time...

By Jove! I have an idea... Stay here, old chap, and let me know as soon as they start moving up the slope...

Right!

BACK AT THE LORRY, HIS HAND ON THE BRAKE, BLAKE WAITS FOR MORTIMER'S SIGNAL.

FROM HIS VANTAGE POINT, THE PROFESSOR SEES THE ARMOURED CARS ENTER THE GORGE...

They're in!!!

All right!

BLAKE RELEASES THE BRAKE, AND THE LORRY, SUDDENLY FREE, THUNDERS BACK DOWN THE SLOPE!

THAT DONE, BLAKE AND MORTIMER RESUME THEIR ESCAPE, RUNNING UP THE ROAD...

Pretty steep!

!

THE CRASH IS DEVASTATING!...

BING

We've been climbing for an hour. Doesn't this blasted pass have a summit?

Yes, it's hard going. But we must get over it post haste! You never know...

INDEED, THE CREW OF THE SECOND ARMOURED CAR HAS MANAGED TO CLEAR THE ROAD, AND...

... SUDDENLY...

Take cover! Quickly!

Blast it! The other car!

CLACK

CLACK

Surrender!

Nuts!

Oh, is that how it is? You English dogs! Just wait: A few shots from our cannon will change your minds!

SHELLS RAIN DOWN ON OUR FRIENDS.

BANG

BOOM

How are you enjoying the fireworks, my dear Blake?

SUDDENLY, HOWEVER, THE GORGE IS FILLED WITH THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE, AND A HORDE OF HIGHLAND MEN SPRINGS UP OUT OF NOWHERE AND RUSHES TOWARDS THE ARMOURED CAR, SCREAMING LIKE DEVILS.

Partisans!

TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE, THE VEHICLE'S CREW IS SWIFTLY MASSACRED.

Victory!

Who are you?

Britons, escaped from Fort Keru, and we thank you for arriving in the nick of time! Our plane crashed in the desert...

Yes, I know. We were alerted and, thankfully, Allah led us to you. Welcome, and peace be upon you. What do you intend to do now?

We must make our way to a rendezvous point some 40 miles southeast of here, in the mountains, as quickly as possible. Is that armoured car serviceable?

I will check.

A LITTLE LATER...

That's it—the car is ready. But, you only have petrol for about 12 miles, just enough to reach the next refuelling station in the plains. It's a detour, obviously, but an inescapable one. The station chief is one of ours. Tell him: "It feels like stormy weather," and he will answer: "It will lift tomorrow." It's the password for the mountain partisans. Go now, and may Allah guide your steps!

NOW WEARING THE UNIFORMS OF THE DEAD IMPERIALS, BLAKE AND MORTIMER LEAVE THE PARTISANS.

... after the victory!

We'll see you later...

Goodbye...

NOW BACK ON THE PLAINS, BLAKE AND MORTIMER ARRIVE AT THE STATION AS THE SUN SETS.

Just in time. The tank is almost empty.

A MAN APPEARS AT THE GATE OF THE STATION...

It feels like stormy weather...

... but it will lift tomorrow. I am Achmet. What can I do for you?

Fill up our tank, Achmet, as fast as possible! I'm coming down to help you.

NO SMOKING

BY ORDER

Right away, Sir.

AS THE TWO MEN BEGIN THEIR TASK, THOUGH, ANOTHER ENEMY ARMOURED VEHICLE APPEARS IN THE DISTANCE...

Blast it!

The Imperials!

We can't leave—not enough petrol yet... I'll be at the wheel, awaiting your signal.

Indeed. Be ready to drive like a bat out of hell...

Finally, there you are!... We received your distress call when the partisans attacked, and then, suddenly, nothing! We've been looking for you for hours... The others are on their way...

Dammit. We forgot the wireless.

THE ENEMY VEHICLE PARKS IN FRONT OF THE OUTPOST.

Well, Hori, what happened? Tell me the whole story...

Well, what's wrong? Has my honourable friend lost his tongue? What?

Oh, right!... I understand. You don't trust the local...

MORTIMER DOESN'T DARE REFUSE.

Cigarette?

Wait... You're not Hori!!!

THE FLAME FROM THE LIGHTER SHINES SQUARELY ONTO MORTIMER'S FACE...

EXPOSED, MORTIMER DOESN'T HESITATE A SECOND AND KNOCKS HIS OPPONENT DOWN WITH A MIGHTY HOOK TO THE CHIN!

THE IMPERIAL, STUNNED, DROPS HIS LIGHTER...

... STRAIGHT ONTO A PUDDLE OF SPILLED PETROL. FLAMES RISE INSTANTLY, SPREADING HORRIFICALLY FAST!!!

Help!

MORTIMER LEAPS ONTO HIS ARMOURED CAR, AND BLAKE RACES IT AWAY FROM THE DANGER, BEFORE THE BEWILDERED EYES OF THEIR ENEMIES.

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THE CONFLAGRATION SPREADS TO THE ENTIRE STATION, SURROUNDING THE IMPERIAL VEHICLE WITH AN IMPENETRABLE CURTAIN OF FLAMES...

... AND, AS BLAKE AND MORTIMER BARREL DOWN THE ROAD, A FORMIDABLE EXPLOSION SHAKES THE VERY GROUND.

The ammunition cooked off!

MEANWHILE, AT FORT KERU, A FURIOUS OLRIK CONDUCTS A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION.

So, you don't know any more?... Let me get this straight: The prisoners are searched as soon as they're arrested, and no documents are found on them. Once at the fort, they're immediately locked up and kept incommunicado, until first Lieutenant Ismail and then Major Hussein enter the cell. But, since Hussein and Ismail are both dead, they're not about to talk!... Right! Let's start again from the beginning. You, Sergeant, come with me and show me the exact spot where you found Blake and Mortimer.

AN HOUR LATER...

It's here, Colonel.

WHILE OLRIK IS INSPECTING THE AREA, A GUST OF WIND PICKS UP A SHEET OF PAPER...

What's that? Paper? Bring it to me, Sergeant.

Yes, Colonel.

THE PAPER THE SERGEANT BRINGS BACK IS, IN FACT, THE ONE ISMAIL HAD DROPPED AS HE PICKED UP THE DOCUMENTS.

Here, Colonel.

B. 34° 32 NORTH LAT 60° EAST LONG

Well, well, well...

THE ARRIVAL OF A MOTORCYCLE COURIER INTERRUPTS THE COLONEL'S MUSINGS.

Colonel, the fugitives took over an armoured car at the Chemma Pass last night. With it, they set the S17 refuelling station on fire and destroyed another armoured car that was trying to stop them. The last report...

Go on!

North? Are you certain about this?

... had them heading north.

Then they're heading straight for the desert!... Alert our air force. I want every fighter in the air immediately! But, pass the word: I need them alive, do you hear? I want them alive!!!

MEANWHILE, BLAKE AND MORTIMER, HAVING DRIVEN ALL NIGHT, HAVE STOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF A DESOLATE LANDSCAPE, CONFUSED.

We must have gone the wrong way. But, the compass... Let's see!

Say, Blake, we seem to be at the edge of the desert...

That's it. The compass needle was stuck! We've been going due north!

Dammit! So, those mountains over there...

Hey! Blake, take a look at what's coming over there!...

A FLIGHT OF IMPERIAL FIGHTERS, ALERTED BY OLRIK, IS RAPIDLY APPROACHING.

Our only chance to escape them is to get back to the mountain as quickly as possible!

Full speed ahead, then, Blake!!!

Careful, now! Don't forget we have orders to take the strangers alive. We must immobilise them without hurting them...

THE SQUADRON LEADER GIVES LAST-MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE THE ATTACK.

THEN, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, THE FIGHTERS DIVE ON THEIR QUARRY...

... AS THE ARMOURED CAR, SURROUNDED BY A HAIL OF BULLETS, TEARS ALONG AT THE MAXIMUM SPEED ITS ENGINE CAN PRODUCE.

Blake, those devils are after our fuel tank!... I'm manning the machinegun!

Go ahead, old chap, try to keep them away! And do be careful!

DESPITE THE CONTINUOUS STRAFING RUNS, MORTIMER, HAVING CLIMBED INTO THE TURRET, OPENS FIRE ON THE ATTACKERS.

SOON, HIT BY ONE OF THE PROFESSOR'S BURSTS, A FIGHTER SMASHES INTO THE GROUND.

BUT THE ENEMIES ARE SO MANY, SO RELENTLESS, AND THE MOUNTAIN STILL SO DISTANT, THAT THE SITUATION IN THE ARMOURED CAR IS GETTING CRITICAL...

Hello, Blake! I'm running out of ammunition!!!

Keep your chin up, my friend: Providence is with us! Here's something that will save us!...

THROWING CAUTION TO THE WIND, BLAKE DRIVES THE ARMOURED CAR STRAIGHT INTO THE MAELSTROM!!!...

A MASSIVE MONSOON COMES SCREAMING DOWN FROM THE HORIZON, RAISING HUGE CLOUDS OF CHOKING DUST...

SENSING IN IT THEIR LAST CHANCE OF SALVATION, BLAKE DRIVES THE ARMOURED CAR STRAIGHT INTO THE MAELSTROM.

They're going to escape!!!

UNDERSTANDING THE CAPTAIN'S INTENT, THE LEADER GIVES IT ONE LAST TRY...

... AND THE ARMOURED CAR DISAPPEARS UNDER A LAST BURST OF FIRE INSIDE THE DUST!

Climb to 6,000 feet!

TO ESCAPE THE STORM, THE SQUADRON LEADER ORDERS HIS MEN TO A HIGHER ALTITUDE.

Hello! Ohira squadron to Colonel Olrik! Urgent call!

HE THEN REPORTS THE DETAILS OF THE ATTACK TO OLRIK.

All right, what's done is done. Stay in the air until the storm has passed, then try to locate the British. There aren't many roads... As for me, I'll make sure all accesses to the mountain are blocked.

OBEYING THEIR ORDERS, OLRIK'S MEN FOLLOW THE FUGITIVES' PROJECTED PATH, VAINLY TRYING TO PIERCE THE DARK CLOUDS.

MEANWHILE, BLAKE AND MORTIMER, WHO HAVE MANAGED TO REACH THE MOUNTAIN, ARE STRUGGLING TO MAKE PROGRESS AGAINST THE FURY OF THE STORM.

Nasty situation. The ground is slippery... And that chasm is giving me the screaming abdabs!...

Yes, we'd better be careful. One wrong move and we'll take quite a tumble...

SUDDENLY, THE ONBOARD WIRELESS'S RED INDICATOR LIGHTS UP, INDICATING THAT THE ENEMY HQ IS ABOUT TO TRANSMIT ORDERS TO ALL THE ARMOURED VEHICLES UNDER ITS COMMAND.

IMMEDIATELY, MORTIMER TURNS HIS HEADPHONES ON AND LISTENS CAREFULLY...

No doubt they're talking about us, but they're doing it in code. Even worse, that blasted storm is generating enormous amounts of static!

Wait a minute... Why don't you try to contact B.32, our rendezvous point? We're not very far now... And...

Unfortunately, this wireless only emits up to 14.1 centimetres, whereas our radios are calibrated for wavelengths between 14.6cm and 18.6cm*. Still...

... let's see. Maybe if I push the dial past its limit...

9 10 11 12 13 14.1

Hello, hello, this is G.R.1... This is G.R.1... Calling B.32... Come in, B.32, calling B.32...

MORTIMER BEGINS CALLING...

Francis, I think B.32's answering!!!

... Hello... This... CRRRRR!... 32. This is B.32 call... CRRRRR!... CRRRRR! Who?... Repeat last... Rep... CRRRRR!!!

Ouch, my ears! So much interference from the lightning! Hello! Hello!... Come in! B.32, where are you? Hello! Hello!...

*WAVELENGTH IN INCHES (5.55, 5.75 TO 7.32) OR FREQUENCY IN GHZ (2.126, 2.053 TO 1.612)

AT THAT MOMENT, RIPPING THROUGH THE BOILING CLOUDS, AN ENORMOUS BOLT OF LIGHTNING SLAMS INTO THE LONE PEAK.

WITH A TERRIFIC CRASH, THE BLASTED SUMMIT DISINTEGRATES INTO MASSIVE BLOCKS THAT ROLL AND TUMBLE DOWN INTO THE VALLEY!...

Hey, what's going on?...

The mountain is collapsing!!!

... AND THE ARMOURED CAR DISAPPEARS UNDER A TITANIC ROCKSLIDE!

SEVERAL HOURS LATER, MOTHER NATURE IS APPEASED AT LAST. YET, THE SUN ALSO BRINGS BACK OLRIK'S RELENTLESS AIRBORNE HOUNDS!

BEFORE LONG, THE SQUADRON LEADER IS TRANSMITTING A FANTASTIC MESSAGE.

Hello! Colonel!... Armoured car sighted!... Lying at the bottom of a canyon, in a torrent...

See, Colonel, there it is, down there...

AT DUSK, OLRIK ARRIVES ON SITE.

I wonder...

The bodies must have been carried off by the current.

THREE DAYS HAVE PASSED. DOWN INSIDE A DESERTED GORGE, TWO MEN ARE WALKING ALONG A DRY RIVERBED...

Well, Philip, we escaped our pursuers once again!... Thanks to that rockslide, too.

Yes, Blake. What a brilliant idea you had! By pushing the armoured car into the canyon intentionally to simulate an accident, you made them think we were killed in the fall. And as long as they think we're dead...

What did I tell you? Olrik's not taking any chances, old chap!

Whether Olrik bought the ruse remains to be seen...

Another patrol!

Bah! We're almost at B.32 now. If my calculations are correct, the plateau must be behind this crest.

INDEED, TWO HOURS LATER...

At last!

The plateau!

DELIGHTED, THE TWO MEN RUSH FORWARD, WHEN A DEEP VOICE CALLS OUT FROM BEHIND THEM...

Stop!

One moment, Captain Blake!

A friend who wants to help.

Who are you?

What do you want?

Look at this.

M.L.C

Yes, sir.

The M.L.C.!??

Sergeant Ahmed Nasir, 5th Battalion, Makran Levy Corps.

How did you come to be here?

I served under you at Bela. Just recently, I was part of Wazir* Zahan's escort. We were massacred, and I was the only one to make it out alive. I was trying to join up with the partisans in the north when I saw a British plane land... Allah, in his infinite wisdom, was good enough to guide my steps towards you so that I may be of great assistance. Come with me.

Careful; stay out of sight.

?

?

THE PLATEAU SUDDENLY STRETCHES OUT BEFORE OUR TWO FRIENDS' EYES.

It is British!... It's the rescue aircraft!

Yes, it's British...

Take the binoculars, though, Captain... And take a closer look.

You see the plane, don't you?... It's the one you were seeking... But look carefully at the soldiers' uniforms...

Pan right, now... Do you see that group of officers? There's a white man among them who seems to be their leader.

By Jove, it's he! It's Olrik!

OX3

You see, gentlemen, I was right. The coordinates on this paper—B.32, at 34 degrees north latitude by 60 degrees east longitude—were to a rendezvous point on this very plateau! Therefore, my plan should succeed. Assuming Blake and Mortimer are still alive, of course...

... every access path is guarded, and...

... machinegun nests are placed all around the plateau. A perfect mousetrap.

Yes, Olrik didn't do things halfway.

Without Nasir's fortuitous intervention, we'd have been caught like rats!

*VIZIER—A HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL, A MINISTER

WHAT ARE THESE SINISTER-LOOKING MEN WAITING FOR?

But how is it that Olrik is here? Three days ago, B32 was still answering...

Precisely, Sahib!... I arrived yesterday, and from this very spot I witnessed the Imperial paratroopers' assault. Powerless, I watched your friends mount a heroic defence. Unfortunately, the forces were simply too unbalanced, and the crew was eventually overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

Since the area is wild and dangerous, I hid here. From this observation post, I followed your arrival down in the riverbed with my binoculars. I recognised you right away, Captain. Seeing that you were heading straight into a trap, I intervened. If you'd come out of that canyon, you'd surely have been caught...

... for right after the British crew was massacred, a plane and several gliders landed, bringing reinforcements. They immediately took position on all the strategic points of the plateau, as well as the access roads... See there, Captain? They camouflaged the aircraft...

I like that idea! They're unlikely to be expecting us from that side!

The problem will be to find a way onto the plateau without being seen by a sentry...

Leave the sentries to me, Sahib. As for the plateau, I located a footpath that leads to the southern side. But, it would be more prudent to wait until tonight...

Well, I'll be! Mortimer, that's Olrik's Red Wing!

It is, indeed! Say, Blake, how about we try to take it?

It's time! Show us that footpath, Nasir...

This way, Sahibs...

NIGHT IS FALLING... ON NASIR'S ADVICE, THE THREE MEN HAVE WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT TO ACT.

BY THE TIME THEY REACH THE FOOT OF THE PLATEAU AFTER A CAREFUL WALK, IT'S COMPLETELY DARK...

Look out, a sentry...

NASIR, AN EXPERIENCED BUSH FIGHTER, CREEPS SILENTLY UP TO THE SENTRY, AND THEN, LEAPING LIKE A TIGER, PLUNGES HIS KNIFE INTO THE SOLDIER'S HEART.

WITH THE SENTRY GONE, OUR FRIENDS REACH THE PLATEAU AND FIND THE RED WING HIDDEN UNDER CAMOUFLAGE NETS.

The Red Wing...

Let's go!

JUST AT THAT MOMENT, THOUGH, THE MOON COMES OUT FROM BEHIND THE CLOUDS, BATHING THE LANDSCAPE IN ITS SILVERY LIGHT...

... AND REVEALING THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER SENTRY AT THE FOOT OF THE AIRCRAFT.

WITHOUT HESITATION, NASIR BEGINS CRAWLING TOWARDS THE MOTIONLESS MAN...

... AND THEN, JUDGING THE RANGE RIGHT, SPRINGS UP AND THROWS HIS KNIFE IN ONE SWIFT MOVEMENT.

Aaah!

WHISTLING THROUGH THE AIR, THE BLADE HITS THE SENTRY BETWEEN THE SHOULDER BLADES.

IMMEDIATELY, THE THREE MEN SPRINT TOWARDS THE RED WING...

Quick!

Remove the nets! I'll prep the engines...

All right!

BLAKE, HAVING MADE IT INTO THE COCKPIT OF THE RED WING, QUICKLY BEGINS TO STUDY THE UNFAMILIAR CONTROLS BY MOONLIGHT.

UNFORTUNATELY, IN A DARK CORNER OF THE COCKPIT, OLRIK'S PILOT AND HENCHMAN WAKES UP...

WRAPPED UP IN HIS INSPECTION, BLAKE DOESN'T HEAR THE IMPERIAL SNEAK UP BEHIND HIM...

BUSY REMOVING THE NETS, MORTIMER AND NASIR SUDDENLY HEAR A CRY FROM INSIDE THE PLANE...

Ahhh!!!

Die, you foreign dog!...

MORTIMER DOESN'T WASTE A SECOND AND RUSHES TOWARDS THE LADDER...

Keep watch here! I'll see what happened!

BARGING INTO THE COCKPIT, MORTIMER KNOCKS THE PILOT OUT WITH A WELL-AIMED BLOW OF HIS PISTOL GRIP.

Down for the count.

Francis! Francis! Pull yourself together, old chap!

Trouble, Sahib! A patrol is coming!!!

CHOKED BY THE PILOT, BLAKE HAS LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.

TERRIBLY CLOSE ALREADY, THE PATROL ADVANCES CAREFULLY UNDER THE MOONLIGHT.

Throw that man out and cut the nets, quickly! I'll take care of starting up the engines.

Yes, Sahib!

ALAS, THE POINT MAN OF THE PATROL SUDDENLY STUMBLES UPON THE CORPSE OF THE FIRST SENTRY.

!

Sahib! The nets are off, but the patrol has just found the body of the first sentry...

Dammit! And these blasted engines simply won't turn over.

ALERTED, THE PATROL MAKES ITS CAUTIOUS WAY TOWARDS THE RED WING.

AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE SIGNALS TENT...

That's strange.

No, Colonel. Still no news of the fugitives.

Rrrrrrrrrrrrraaah!!!

What the devil?!!...

RUSHING OUTSIDE, OLRIK IS JUST IN TIME TO SEE THE RED WING THUNDERING AWAY!

?!

UNDERSTANDING THAT HE'S BEEN TRICKED ONCE AGAIN, OLRIK CRIES OUT HIS RAGE AT BLAKE AND MORTIMER.

By the devil, I will find you!!...

THE SUN HAS RISEN, AND THE RED WING, WHIZZING STRAIGHT TOWARDS MAKRAN, IS NOW NEAR THE SECRET BASE...

Sahib! The captain is coming to.

Hello, Blake!

Hello, Mortimer! He cleaned my clock and no mistake...

Indeed, old chap! You had a close call! A few seconds more and that rogue of a pilot would have choked the life out of you! Well, thank the Lord we're far away from Olrik now. We made good time; we're currently over the desert between Panjgur and Turbat. If all goes well, in an hour we...

... Wait a minute! What's that? A column of troops... Let's take a closer look...

THE RED WING DESCENDS TO A LOWER ALTITUDE, AND ITS CREW IS DELIGHTED TO IDENTIFY THE RETREATING REMNANTS OF A MAKRAN LEVY CORPS BATTALION...

HOWEVER, THE MEN OF THE M.L.C. DON'T SHARE IN OUR FRIENDS' ENTHUSIASM, AND...

Let him get closer!...

Look out! The Imperials!

The devil?! They're shooting at us!?!

... ONCE IN RANGE, THE RED WING SUDDENLY FINDS ITSELF THE TARGET OF HEAVY MACHINEGUN FIRE.

Come now, old chap, you're forgetting we bear the Imperial star! So...

What on earth got into those fools, anyway?!

By Allah! I was sure I'd hit it!

We're going down!!!

UNFORTUNATELY, THE RED WING HAS BEEN HIT IN A VITAL PART, AND JUST A FEW MILES FURTHER...

... IT IS FORCED TO MAKE A BRUTAL LANDING DESPITE MORTIMER'S DESPERATE EFFORTS.

THE CREW, THANKFULLY UNHARMED, CRAWLS OUT OF THE CRASHED AIRCRAFT...

What rotten luck!!!

Sahib, we could try to make it to Turbat, some 20 miles from here. I'll go into town alone, since I can blend in easily, and find us some horses.

This is our approximate position, some 300 miles short of our goal...

Perfect. We'll leave at sunset. In the meantime, though, let's get something to eat!

Ho! Ho! Looks like our friend Olrik spares no expense! Dinner is served!

Such a feast after graciously lending us his personal aircraft!... I say, Mortimer, that Olrik fellow really is a perfect gentleman!

I couldn't agree more—and his whisky is a pure marvel. To Olrik's health!

Sahib! A troop of horsemen is approaching!

What is it, Nasir?

Is something wrong?

NASIR WALKS FORWARD TO PARLEY.

Let me go talk to them, Captain.

Erm... Friends or foes?

Let's grab our weapons, anyway.

What can these people want with us this time?

Whatever they want, I'm afraid they're too late for dinner!

SOON, THOUGH, A JOYFUL NASIR IS COMING BACK WITH TWO OF THE HORSEMEN.

Sahibs! They're friends!

Sahibs! This is Mohammed Wali, Jemadar* of Wad!

Delighted, Mohammed Wali.

Salaam be with you, gentlemen.

I have heard much about you, Captain, and I am happy to be of assistance. I am going to visit the Sultan of Oman in Gwadar, and I will pass through Turbat. I have trusted friends there who can get you horses... You will need a change of clothing first, though. Just to be safe.

*A MILITARY COMMANDER IN THE SERVICE OF A LAND-OWNING ARISTOCRAT

You look positively dashing, old fellow! You could be mistaken for the Wazir himself!

Ha! Ha! No doubt a little stroll through Hyde Park in these garments would make quite an impression.

AN HOUR LATER, THE JEMADAR'S CARAVAN IS ONCE AGAIN UNDERWAY.

TOWARDS THE END OF THE DAY, THE SMALL TROOP ARRIVES BÉFORE TURBAT, WHERE THE NEW WAZIR, RENEGADE LEADER IN THE IMPERIALS' POCKET, HAS CHOSEN TO RESIDE.

Look! That's the Jemadar of Wad! He's a real man, this one!

Yes! He wouldn't be the kind to sell himself to the invaders!

FROM A NEARBY WINDOW, HOWEVER, A SINISTER-LOOKING MAN IS WATCHING VERY INTENTLY...

Well, well... Friends of our local rebel, Zahan Khan. Let's see...

... AS THE JEMADAR OF WAD INTRODUCES TWO MEN FROM HIS PARTY TO HIS FRIEND ZAHAN KHAN.

... So, come to court the favour of our new Imperial-loving Wazir, have you?...

When we go to that traitor, it will be to impale him!

INVESTIGATING, THE MAN ENTERS ZAHAN KHAN'S COURTYARD, WHERE THE JEMADAR'S TROOP HAS STOPPED.

Watch yourself, friend; that quick tongue of yours could get you into trouble... Be careful it doesn't get cut off!

Oh! What is this? Threats!?... Get out, you dog! Leave! Or, by Allah, we shall see the colour of your guts!

Leave him, my friend. He's a Bezendjas and one of the new Wazir's men... They say he spies for the Imperials...

Get out!!!

THE MAN WALKS AWAY WITHOUT A WORD...

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE WAILING OF AN IMPERIAL MILITARY POLICE CAR'S SIREN RESOUNDS THROUGH THE SQUARE.

STEPPING OUT OF THE CAR, AN IMPERIAL M.P. HANGS A POSTER ON THE WALL OF THE HOUSE.

I hear they're looking for two Englishmen...

By Allah! A 10,000-rupee reward!

They must be important people!...

I don't like the sound of this, Mortimer... Better we not tarry here...

Yes, prudence is required here. Especially for you, old chap... Because, frankly, a blond Baloch... Well!

By Allah! How interesting!

ALAS, THE BEZENDJAS IS STILL WATCHING, AND...

My master Zahan Khan wishes you a good night, Sahibs, and hopes you will accept these refreshments. He also instructed me to tell you that he ordered your manservant Nasir to choose the best horses from his stables for you...

Thank Zahan Khan for us, and tell him that Great Britain will not forget its friends.

SOME TIME LATER, IN ZAHAN KHAN'S HOME.

No, thank you. I'll have some fruit instead.

Ah! Splendid idea! I'm parched! Would you like some ice-cold water, old chap?

Well, Mortimer, good night. Don't forget that we must be in the saddle at dawn!

Huh? Oh, yes... By Jove, I'm exhausted! Good night, Blake...

HALF AN HOUR LATER...

THE MYSTERIOUS BEZENDJAS, WHO HAS SNEAKED ONTO THE OUTSIDE GALLERY, HAS BEEN LISTENING...

... AND NASIR, RETURNING FROM THE STABLES AT THAT MOMENT, IS SURPRISED TO SEE A MAN SLIDING DOWN A PILLAR TO THE GROUND...

?

THE MYSTERY MAN IS IMMEDIATELY JOINED BY ANOTHER, WHO OPENS A DOOR TO THE STREET FOR HIM. WITH A LAST NOD TO HIS ACCOMPLICE, THE BEZENDJAS DISAPPEARS INTO THE NIGHT.

NASIR, EAGER TO KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED, WAITS FOR THE ACCOMPLICE TO LEAVE AND, PUTTING THE DEEP SHADOWS CAST BY THE BUILDINGS IN THE MOONLIGHT TO GOOD USE, BEGINS TRAILING THE STRANGE APPARITION...

AS HE ARRIVES NEAR THE CITY WALL, HOWEVER, NASIR LOSES HIS MAN...

Oh!? Where could he have gone?...

SUDDENLY, TO THE HURRIED POUNDING OF HIS HORSE'S HOOVES, A RIDER BURSTS FROM A NARROW ALLEY AND INTO THE LIGHT...

By the Prophet's beard! The Bezendjas!

NASIR, HAVING GUESSED THE SPY'S INTENTIONS, DASHES FORWARD TO INTERCEPT HIM, BUT HE STUMBLES AGAINST A ROCK AND FALLS HEADFIRST INTO A SOLID WALL.

AS THE UNFORTUNATE MAN LIES THERE, KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS, THE BEZENDJAS RIDES HELL-FOR-LEATHER OUT OF TOWN...

BY THE TIME NASIR COMES TO, DAWN HAS ALMOST COME...

?

THE MEMORY OF THE NIGHT'S EVENTS COMES FLOODING BACK TO HIM, AND HE RUSHES THROUGH THE DESERTED STREET TOWARDS ZAHAN KHAN'S HOUSE...

Captain! Captain! We are betrayed!!!

... AND STORMS INTO THE ROOM WHERE BLAKE AND MORTIMER ARE RESTING.

THE BEZENDJAS SPY RIDES HELL FOR LEATHER FOR THE CITY GATE. NASIR DASHES FORWARD TO INTERCEPT HIM, BUT...

The Bezendjas will have ridden hard straight to the nearest outpost... We have to go.

Yes, Captain, and we must make haste. The sun is rising!

HAVING HEARD NASIR'S HURRIED REPORT, BLAKE IS QUICK TO UNDERSTAND THAT SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES AWAIT THEM.

Ho, Mortimer! Mortimer! Wake up, old chap! Things are heating up here.

Mortimer! Mortimer!!! Good grief, what a log!

AMAZED, THEN WORRIED, BLAKE IS FORCED TO ADMIT THAT THE PROFESSOR'S SLUMBER IS NOT NORMAL.

The miserable dogs!!!

I know! The water he drank last night must have been drugged by some collaborator... Maybe even the steward himself.

Captain, the city gates could be locked any moment. What are your orders?

By Jove, you're right! Well, only one thing to do: Go get the horses and bring them to the well near the gates. I'll take care of the professor...

CLACK CLACK

LEFT ALONE, BLAKE USES ALL MEANS AT HIS DISPOSAL TO WAKE UP MORTIMER. WHEN SLAPPING PROVES INEFFECTIVE...

Desperate times...!

Shhh! One moment!... I think that... Wait!...

Now, see here, Captain Blake! What, precisely, is the meaning of this schoolboy prank?...

... THE CAPTAIN, AT HIS WITS' END, DUMPS THE CONTENTS OF A LARGE WATER JAR ON HIS FRIEND'S HEAD.

BLAKE DASHES TO THE GALLERY AND, BY THE WEAK LIGHT OF DAWN, SEES THE STEWARD CAREFULLY OPENING THE DOOR.

Too late!

What is it?

Trouble! The Imperials are in the courtyard!

Quick! Let's check the exit to the balcony... It's our only chance!

Oh! Really?... Well, what a lovely start to the day!

BLAKE RUSHES BACK THE OTHER WAY, PUSHES THE DOOR OPEN...

Excellent! The coast is clear. Mortimer, quick, hand me a belt!

... AND STEPS OUT ONTO THE BALCONY OVERLOOKING ZAHAN KHAN'S GARDEN.

Mortimer, stop! They're coming!

TYING THE BELT TAKES ONLY A SECOND, AND MORTIMER IS ALREADY STEPPING OVER THE BALUSTRADE, WHEN...

INDEED. ADVANCING CAUTIOUSLY, THE IMPERIALS HAVE JUST ENTERED THE GARDENS.

Trapped like rats, old fellow. And so close to our goal, too!

What rotten luck! Ah, but I'm not going without a fight!

MEANWHILE, IN THE COURTYARD...

Good! You, Bezendjas: You go first.

They're still up there!

This way. Quietly!

Get ready!

?

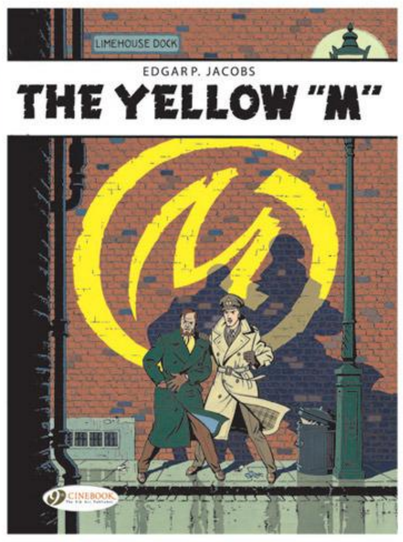
?

?

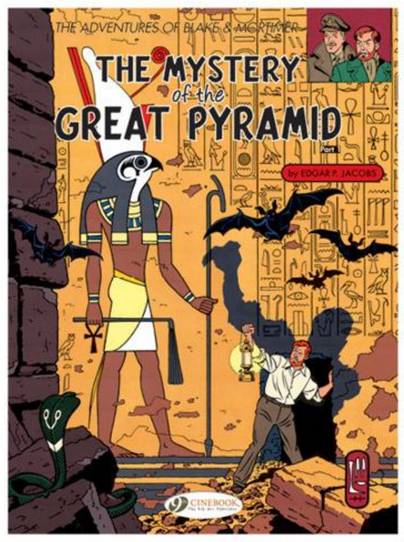
YOU WILL DISCOVER THE REST OF THIS ADVENTURE IN THE SECOND PART:

MORTIMER'S ESCAPE.

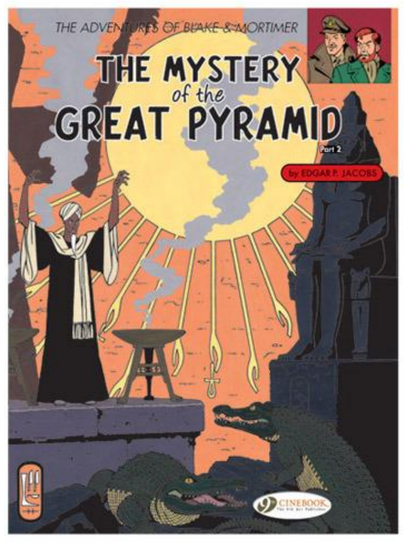
THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER



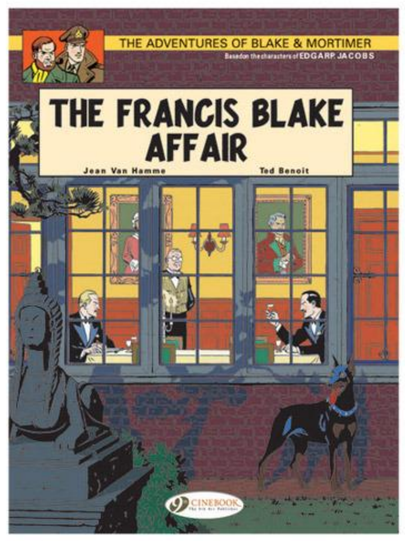
1-The Yellow "M"
EDGAR P. JACOBS



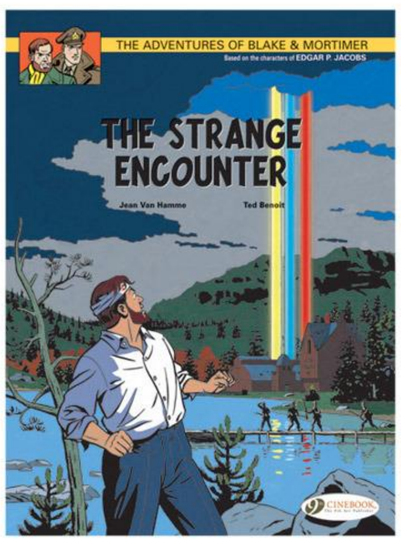
2-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



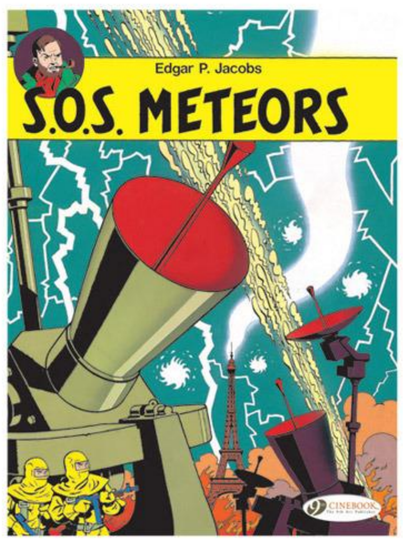
3-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



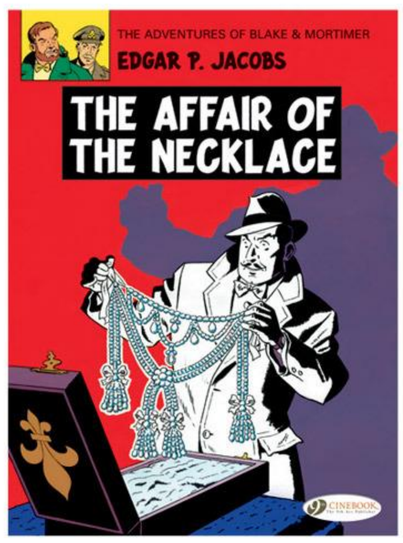
4-The Francis Blake Affair
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



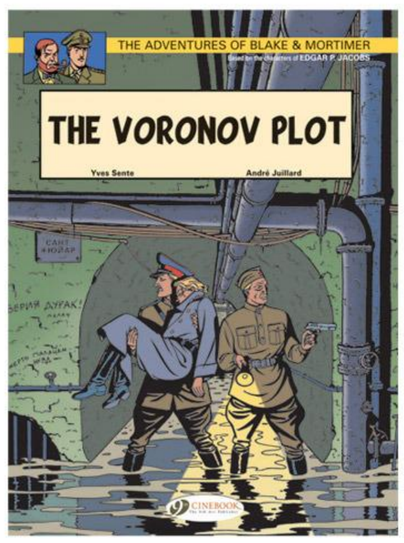
5-The Strange Encounter
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



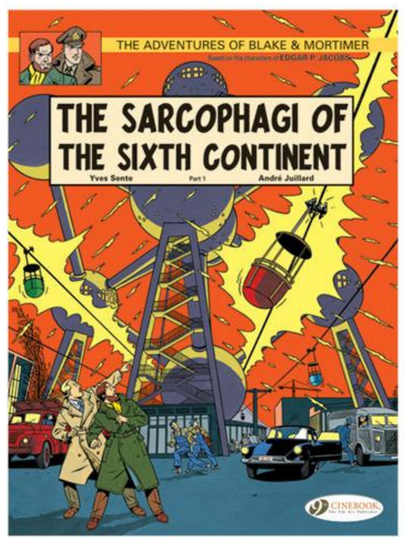
6-S.O.S. Meteors
EDGAR P. JACOBS



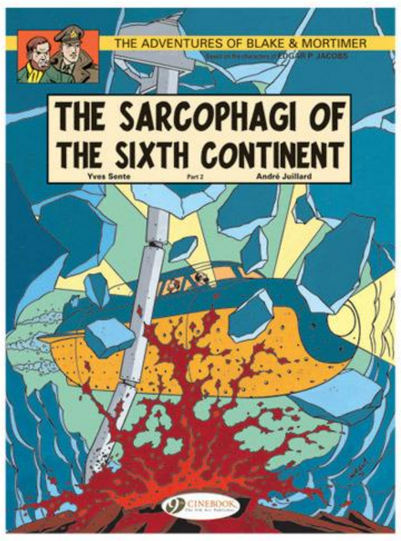
7-The Affair of the Necklace
EDGAR P. JACOBS



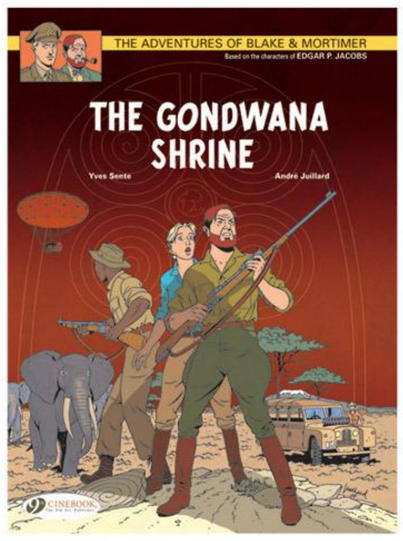
8-The Voronov Plot
SENTE - JUILLARD



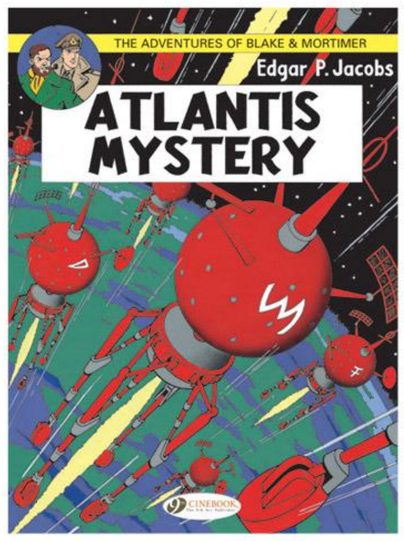
9-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 1
SENTE - JUILLARD



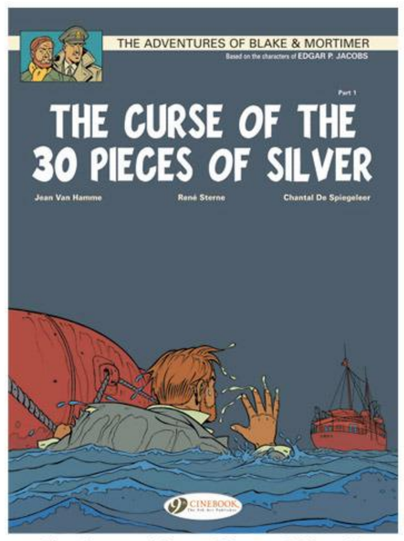
10-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 2
SENTE - JUILLARD



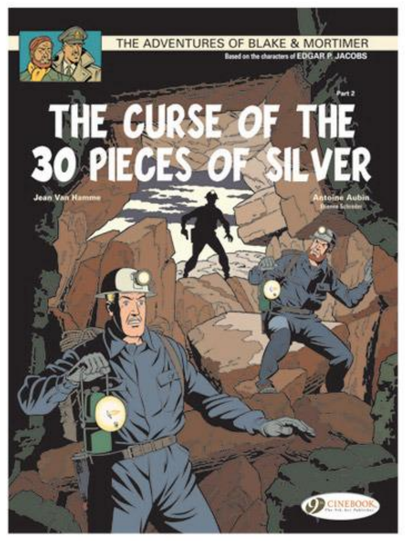
11-The Gondwana Shrine
SENTE - JUILLARD



12-Atlantis Mystery
EDGAR P. JACOBS

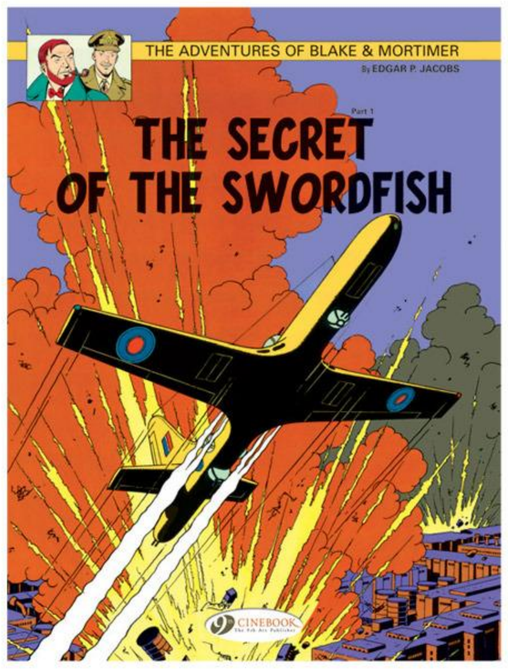


13-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 1
VAN HAMME - STERNE - DE SPIEGELEER

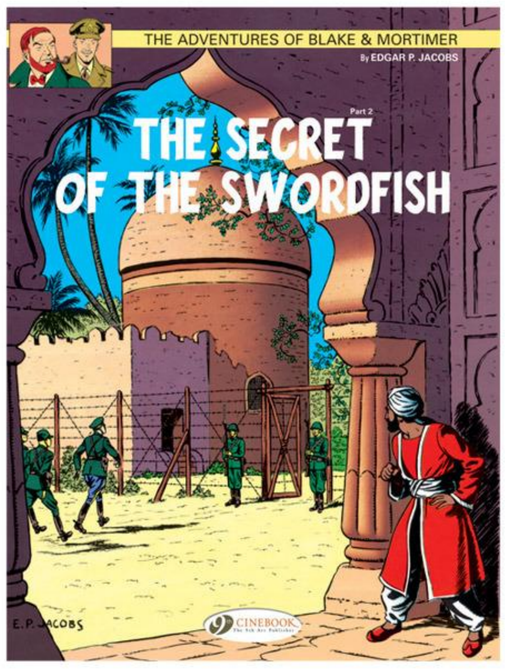


14-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 2
VAN HAMME - AUBIN - SCHRÉDER

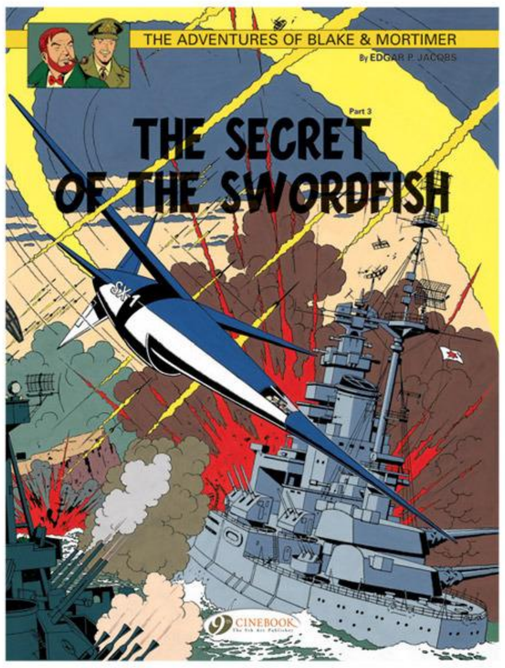
2013



15-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



16-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



17-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 3
EDGAR P. JACOBS

THREE MEN ON THE RUN FROM AN EVIL EMPIRE ARE THE WORLD'S ONLY HOPE FOR FREEDOM.

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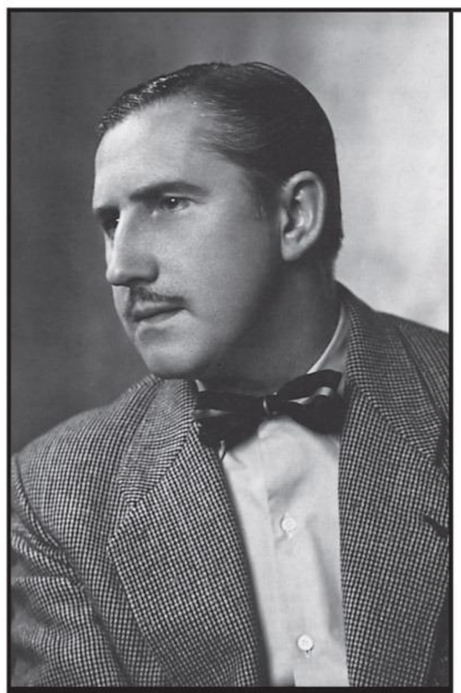


EDGAR P. JACOBS – 1946

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH Part 2

JUNE 2013

PUBLISHED BY

9th CINEBOOK
The 9th Art Publisher

THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

By EDGAR P. JACOBS

Part 2

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH

E.P. JACOBS

9th CINEBOOK
The 9th Art Publisher

THE IMPERIALS ARE STUNNED TO DISCOVER THAT THE ROOM IS EMPTY!

Curse it!... They escaped by the balcony!

Nothing! That's impossible! Hey, you lot!!... Where are the two Britons?

Gone?

Search the gardens! Now!...

The Britons?... But, Captain...

As for you, turn over this entire room! Maybe they left some clues behind.

Mister officer, the stable door is open and three horses are missing!...

SUDDENLY, THE STEWARD RUSHES IN, FRANTIC.

Argh! I'm warning you, you miserable dogs! If we don't find those two Europeans, I will...

HEARING THE NEWS, THE IMPERIAL FLIES INTO A RAGE...

What is the meaning of such a ruckus in my house?

JUST THEN, ZAHAN KHAN APPEARS AT THE DOOR, FOLLOWED BY TWO SERVANTS.

So, you're the one who was hiding the two spies, you worthless slave.

I do not understand what you mean, stranger...

He's lying! I served them here, last night! At his order.

THE STEWARD INTERRUPTS...

Treacherous dog! Here is your reward...

THE KHAN, FURIOUS AT THE TREACHERY OF HIS SERVANT, RAISES HIS SABRE AND LEAPS...

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH - Part 2

Take this, worm!...

RRRRA

THE STEWARD IS DEALT A MORTAL BLOW, BUT THE ENRAGED OFFICER LIFTS HIS SUBMACHINE GUN AND KILLS THE KHAN...

You cur!

BANG

AT THE SIGHT, FURY OVERCOMES ONE OF THE GUARDS, WHO DRAWS HIS REVOLVER AND SHOOTS THE IMPERIAL POINT BLANK, KILLING HIM INSTANTLY.

To arms!... The Imperials have murdered Zahan Khan!!! Zahan Khan is dead!!!

FOLLOWING THIS GRIM CRY, ARMED MEN APPEAR FROM EVERYWHERE...

... AND MERCILESS BATTLE IS JOINED. THE SOLDIERS IN THE ROOM ARE SLAUGHTERED IN AN INSTANT.

UNDER WITHERING FIRE FROM THE GALLERIES, THOSE IN THE COURTYARD TRY IN VAIN TO RETURN FIRE...

... WHILE ANOTHER GROUP, TRAPPED IN THE GARDENS, OFFERS DESPERATE RESISTANCE...

Good show, Mortimer! Without that last-minute inspiration of yours, we were caught!...

Inspiration is a family tradition! Just between you and me, I didn't think it'd work...

MEANWHILE, ON THE BALCONY...

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE FIGHT IN THE GARDENS AND THE ONE IN THE COURTYARD, OUR FRIENDS DECIDE TO HEAD FOR THE TERRACE.

This way, quick-ly! Make for the stairs!

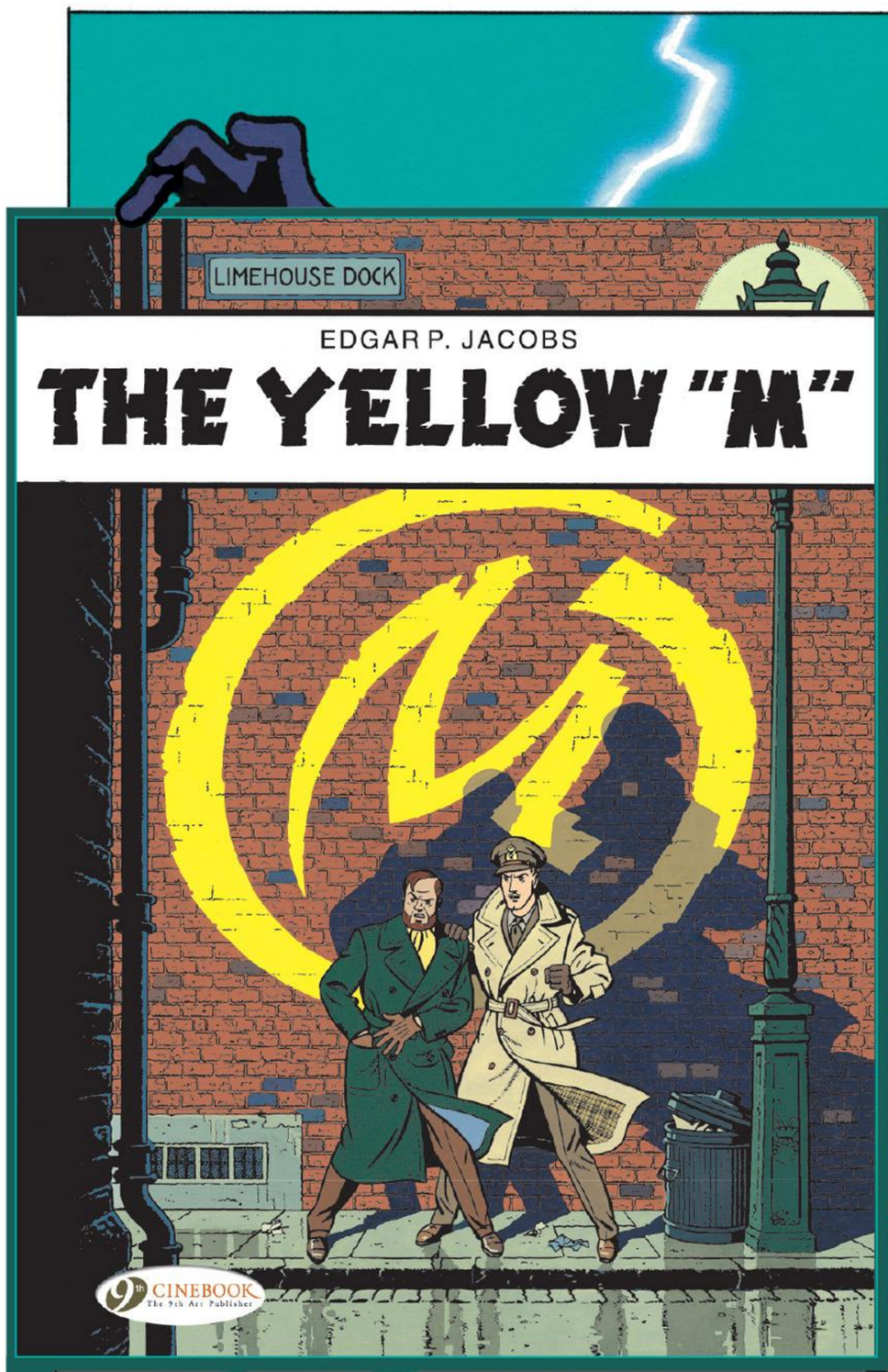
Blimey! Sounds like quite a scuffle out there!

HAVING MADE THEIR WAY DISCREETLY ALONG THE GALLERY, THEY RUSH UP THE STAIRS LEADING TO THE TERRACE...

Ho, there, Mortimer... What about the Swordfish, hmm?

Pity... I wouldn't have minded giving those nice folks a hand...

THE SECRET OF THE SWORDFISH - Part 2



THE YELLOW "M"

London's walls resound with the incredible exploits of the "Yellow Mark." The spectacular actions of this mysterious criminal are on the increase: holding up the Bank of England, robbing the imperial crown... No one seems able to stop him. He is so audacious that he lets the police know in advance where he will commit his crimes, each time ridiculing Scotland Yard a little more.
The apparent ease with which he evades police schemes begins to worry the highest authorities of the country.
The Home Office asks Captain Francis Blake to solve the mystery and discover the identity of the man who hides behind the Yellow Mark. The captain immediately takes as partner his old friend, Professor Philip Mortimer, whose scientific knowledge will be invaluable in solving this extremely complex enigma. Who hides behind the Yellow Mark?

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A PURSUIT OF THE INTRUDER IS ORGANISED AT ONCE.

Too late! He must have got away by St. Thomas's Tower.

A SEARCH HAS BECOME DIFFICULT OWING TO THE DARKNESS.

Anything new?

Nothing to be seen! He's vanished into thin air.

HOWEVER, IN THE MIDST OF THE GENERAL UPROAR, THE BEEFEATER MAKES A DISCOVERY THAT CAUSES HIM TO SHOUT WITH FRIGHT.

Heavens!!

HIS SHOUT ECHOES BENEATH THE WALLS OF WAKEFIELD TOWER.

Come here!

TREMBLING, THE BEEFEATER POINTS TO THE DOOR OF THE CROWN JEWELS TOWER.

Look! The door!

It's open!

FOUR BY FOUR, THE SOLDIERS CLIMB THE STAIRS LEADING TO THE TREASURE CHAMBER...

... AND ARE STUPEFIED TO FIND THE MASSIVE STEEL PROTECTIVE DOOR AJAR.

!

PUSHING ASIDE THE HEAVY SHUTTERS, THE BEEFEATER RUSHES TOWARD THE WEIGHTY STEEL AND GLASS CAGE STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHAMBER.

The Crown!...

THE GLASS IS BROKEN, AND AT THE TOP OF THE PYRAMID FORMED BY THE ROYAL JEWELS, WHERE THE IMPERIAL CROWN SHOULD BE, THERE IS AN EMPTY SPACE.

AND SUDDENLY...

Look there!

A SOLDIER POINTS TO THE FATEFUL SIGN INSOLENTLY DISPLAYED ON THE STEEL DOOR.

Edgard Félix Pierre Jacobs (1904–1987), better known under his pen name Edgar P. Jacobs, was a comic book creator (writer and artist), born in Brussels, Belgium. It has been said of Jacobs that he didn't remember a time when he hadn't drawn.

Jacobs assisted fellow Belgian Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi) in the recasting of Hergé's *Tintin in the Congo, Tintin in America, King Ottokar's Sceptre* and *The Blue Lotus* for book publication. He also contributed directly to both the drawing and storylines for the Tintin double-albums *The Secret of the Unicorn/Red Rackham's Treasure* and *The Seven Crystal Balls/ Prisoners of the Sun*.

When the comics magazine Tintin was launched on 26th September 1946, it included Jacobs' story *Le secret de l'Espadon* (*The Secret of the Swordfish*). This story would be the first in the Blake and Mortimer series.

The characters of Captain Francis Blake, dashing head of MI5, his friend Professor Philip Mortimer, a nuclear physicist, and their sworn enemy Colonel Olrik became legendary heroes of the 9th art in the long-running series.

After Jacobs' death in 1987, Bob de Moor completed his unfinished last story. In the mid-1990s, the series was continued by the Jacobs Studios with new teams of writers and artists.

ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION		
1	1950	Le secret de l'Espadon, T1
2	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T2
3	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T3
4	1954	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T1
5	1955	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T2
6	1956	La marque Jaune
7	1957	L'énigme de l'Atlantide
8	1959	S.O.S. Météores
9	1962	Le piège diabolique
10	1967	L'affaire du collier
11	1971	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T1
12	1990	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T2 (Jacobs/De Moor)
13	1996	L'affaire Francis Blake (Van Hamme/Benoit)
14	2000	La machination Voronov (Sente/Juillard)
15	2001	L'étrange rendez-vous (Van Hamme/Benoit)
16	2003	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T1 (Sente/Juillard)
17	2004	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T2 (Sente/Juillar
18	2008	Le sanctuaire du Gondwana (Sente/Juillard)
19	2009	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T1 (Van Hamme/Sterne/De Spiegeleer)
20	2010	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T2 (Van Hamme/Aubin)

CINEBOOK EDITION		
15	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 1
16	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 2
17	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 3
2	2007	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 1
3	2008	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 2
1	2007	The Yellow "M"
12	2012	Atlantis Mystery
6	2009	S.O.S. Meteors
		The Time Trap
7	2010	The Affair of the Necklace
		Professor Satōs Three Formulas, Part 1
		Professor Satōs Three Formulas, Part 2
4	2008	The Francis Blake Affair
8	2010	The Voronov Plot
5	2009	The Strange Encounter
9	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 1
10	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 2
11	2011	The Gondwana Shrine
13	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 1
14	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 2

Original title: Le secret de l'espadon V1

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